

STATE/EPA VISION AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

*Approved by State/EPA Information Management Work Group
At Salt Lake City Meeting*

The States and United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are committed to a partnership to build a locally and nationally accessible, cohesive and coherent environmental information system that will ensure that both the public and regulators have access to the information needed to document environmental performance, understand environmental conditions, and make sound decisions that ensure environmental protection.

Joint State/EPA Operating Principles For Effective Environmental Information Management

Working closely with local governments, the regulated community, the public, and tribal governments, the States and EPA will adhere to the following Operating Principles in their efforts to build efficient and effective environmental information systems that recognize customers' needs, ensure full public access, strengthen environmental program management, minimize reporting costs, and ensure fairness and due process in the protection of trade secrets.

1. **Data collected by the States and/or EPA should have a specific and demonstrable use that:**
 - contributes to public understanding and decision-making about environmental and health risks in their communities;
 - supports States' and EPA's ability to manage environmental programs effectively and enables regulators, legislators and other oversight bodies, and the public to measure success in the implementation of such programs, in a manner that is increasingly based upon environmental results; and
 - imposes the least burden on the private and public sectors, consistent with the above public requirements.
2. **The States and EPA commit to developing ways of sharing core environmental information based on jointly developed data standards and compatible system design.** To this end, business processes and information systems designed by either or both States and EPA should:
 - be designed and managed employing methods and technologies that will assure that the burden of collecting, storing, maintaining, and retrieving these data is minimized and provides for timely data sharing among all users;
 - be managed and maintained to provide enhanced data quality, reliability, security and overall system stewardship;
 - be integrated across programs and facilities based on data standards, in part so that information collection duplication and/or redundancy is reduced as much as possible;
 - provide the context, purpose, reliability, and collection methods for these data, in order to enhance users' understanding and use of data to address environmental issues; and
 - promote ready access to quality environmental information for all levels of government, the regulated community, and the public.
3. **The States and EPA will leverage and share existing and future state and federal investments in the use of information technology.** Recognizing the opportunities and risks associated with the rapid pace of developments in information technology, the States and EPA will work as partners to modernize environmental information systems as rapidly and efficiently as possible, while doing everything possible to ensure that all EPA components and all States participate fully in this process.

4. **The States and EPA recognize that there is a critical need to share information for each agency to be successful in its general mission.** While recognizing that both have special data needs for specific programs that do not require information to be shared or for which information sharing may not be necessary, States and EPA recognize the overriding importance of transparency in public activities and decision-making and of respect in the use and dissemination of each other's information.
5. **The States and EPA will improve the collection, management, and sharing of environmental information to support the achievement of their respective and shared environmental goals and priorities.** Integration of and agreement on these goals and priorities will occur through a structured dialogue (such as the National Environmental Performance Partnership System [NEPPS]).